United Nations S/2016/232

Security Council

Distr.: General
9 March 2016

Original: English

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2211 (2015), in which the Council requested me to report on the implementation of the commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.[1] It covers developments since the issuance of my report of 22 September 2015 (S/2015/735) and provides information on peace and security developments in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region until 29 February 2016.

II. Major developments

A. Political and security developments

2. The Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework is entering its third year of implementation. Progress in the implementation of regional and national commitments remains limited, while the continued presence of illegal armed groups, including the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), the Allied Democratic Forces, the Forces de résistance patriotiques de l'Ituri (FRPI) and several Mai-Mai militias, continues to threaten the security and stability of the region and negatively affects the implementation of the Framework. Furthermore, there was little progress towards the repatriation and demobilization of ex-combatants, including from the former Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) and FDLR, registered during the reporting period. The crisis in Burundi and its far-reaching impact have also contributed to the deterioration of the political, security and humanitarian situation in the region.

[1] In this context, the region is defined as covering the 13 signatories to the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, namely, Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, South Sudan, the Sudan, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. In addition, the following four intergovernmental organizations act as witnesses/guarantors of the Framework: the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Southern African Development Community and the United Nations. For further information, see S/2013/119 and S/2013/131, annex.

16-03458 (E) 110316

Please recycle

3. Notwithstanding the aforementioned challenges, the region witnessed some positive developments during the reporting period. These included largely peaceful general elections in the Central African Republic, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. The Office of my Special Envoy, together with the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), the African Union and other partners, organized the first Great Lakes Private Sector Investment Conference in Kinshasa on 24 and 25 February 2016. The highly successful event attracted some 500 participants, including government officials, private sector actors, development partners and experts. I attended the opening ceremony, alongside President Joseph Kabila of the Democratic Republic of the Congo; the Vice-President of Angola, representing the Chair of ICGLR; and the African Union Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy, representing the Chairperson of the African Union Commission.

4. Another significant development was the signing, on 28 January, by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) of a technical arrangement related to the resumption of military cooperation between the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC)) and MONUSCO.

5. With regard to the neutralization of armed groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, FARDC continued operations against FDLR, the Allied Democratic Forces and FRPI, as indicated in my reports on MONUSCO issued in December 2015 (S/2015/1031) and March 2016. At the twelfth meeting of the Technical Support Committee of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, held in Nairobi on 14 January 2016, the Congolese delegation reported that, of the Congolese Government's estimate of 1,200 FDLR combatants, 1,150 had been neutralized. Among those, 150 were awaiting repatriation to Rwanda. The delegation further attributed the recent upsurge in violations and abuses in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo to the remaining FDLR elements, the breakaway FDLR-Ralliement pour l'unité et la démocratie, Nduma Defence of Congo/Guidon (NDC/Guidon) and other groups with alleged ties to the former M23. During the meeting, the Congolese delegation also reiterated its call on the international community to help identify third countries for relocation of FDLR combatants and dependants who had surrendered but were unwilling to return to Rwanda. The delegation stressed the urgent need to repatriate or relocate to third countries all ex-FDLR combatants and dependants currently in transit camps in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

6. Almost two years after the signing of the Nairobi Declarations by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the former M23 rebel group, implementation remains stalled. Hundreds of ex-M23 combatants are yet to be repatriated from Rwanda and Uganda.

7. On 23 October 2015, ex-M23 political leader Bertrand Bisimwa issued a statement asserting that the former rebel group would not continue to honour its commitments under the Nairobi Declarations on the grounds that the Government had deliberately refused to implement its part of the agreement. He further stated that the former rebel group would not accept any attempt to repatriate ex-combatants outside the provisions of the Nairobi Declarations. Mr. Bisimwa also

communicated similar messages to the Chairs of ICGLR and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), respectively. He further noted that failure to fully implement past agreements between the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and rebel movements had ultimately caused the outbreak of new rebellions.

8. On 24 October 2015, the National Oversight Mechanism of the Democratic Republic of the Congo issued a communiqué in reaction to the statement by the former rebel group. The National Oversight Mechanism denounced the lack of will by ex-M23 leaders and recalled the Congolese Government's efforts to fulfil its commitments, notably by promulgating an amnesty law in February 2014 and by initiating the repatriation of consenting ex-M23 combatants. The National Oversight Mechanism also recalled the decision by the sixth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism, warning ex-M23 leaders against obstructing the repatriation process. On 10 November, Mr. Bisimwa appointed Désiré Rwigema as the new ex-M23 coordinator tasked to oversee the implementation of the Nairobi Declarations in close coordination with the National Oversight Mechanism. Mr. Rwigema replaced René Abandi, who had stepped down as coordinator in January 2015 and is now in charge of transforming the former rebel group into a political party.

9. In order to overcome these challenges, the leaders of the region have continued to push for the implementation of the Nairobi Declarations. On 18 November 2015, the Ministers of Defence of ICGLR member States met in Kinshasa to discuss this matter, in compliance with the decision of the ninth ICGLR Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government held in Luanda on 18 May 2015. The Ministers reviewed the calendar for the repatriation of the remaining ex-M23 combatants in Uganda and noted that repatriation should commence on 1 December 2015 and be concluded by 15 December 2015. Following this decision, a task force, comprising representatives of the ICGLR secretariat, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Uganda People's Defence Force, the Ministry of Defence of Angola (as Chair of ICGLR), MONUSCO and the Office of my Special Envoy, visited Bihanga camp in Uganda from 3 to 15 December 2015.

10. During the visit, the delegation was informed that 646 ex-M23 combatants were present, 490 were recorded as absent, 14 had been admitted to a hospital, 29 had received permission to leave the camp, 9 were in Kampala, 5 were under arrest for crimes and various wrongdoings and 4 had died. The task force urged the ex-M23 combatants present to seize the opportunity to return to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In response, ex-M23 combatants appealed to the witnesses/guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework not to focus solely on the issue of repatriation and to ensure instead that all provisions of the Nairobi Declarations are fully implemented. Following the field mission, 13 ex-M23 combatants were repatriated to the Kamina military base in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with the support of MONUSCO. This brought the number of ex-M23 combatants repatriated from Uganda to a total of 195. A total of 309 ex-M23 combatants are still present in Rwanda. No repatriation from Rwanda took place during the period under review. The aforementioned task force visited Rwanda on 23 and 24 September 2015. During the visit, the Ministers of Defence of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda met bilaterally and issued a joint communiqué on 24 September (see para. 24 below).

11. On the political front, on 28 November 2015, President Joseph Kabila announced the convening of a national dialogue to discuss forthcoming electoral processes in the country. Some opposition groups and civil society organizations opposed the President's proposal for a dialogue. On 4 January 2016, the Episcopal Conference of the Democratic Republic of the Congo also called for a national dialogue and announced the formation of a special committee tasked with maintaining contact with political parties, encouraging mutual trust and advancing initiatives aimed at enhancing the electoral process. On 14 January, the African Union issued a statement supporting the national dialogue and urging all Congolese to reach a consensus that would preserve the gains made in the areas of peace, stability, security, development and democratization. The African Union further requested Edem Kodjo, former Prime Minister of Togo and member of the African Union Panel of the Wise, to travel to Kinshasa for consultations on the national dialogue. On 16 February, the African Union, the United Nations, the European Union and the Organisation internationale de la francophonie issued a joint statement urging all Congolese political actors to spare no effort, within the framework of the country's Constitution, to ensure the successful holding of elections, preserve peace and deepen democracy, including through a political process. The four organizations also underscored the importance of dialogue and the need for political actors to reach an agreement that upholds democracy and the rule of law. In addition, they urged all Congolese political actors to extend their full cooperation to Mr. Kodjo.

12. The crisis in Burundi remained a focus of attention for the region and the international community during the period under review. On 28 December 2015, the President of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni, presided over the ceremony for the relaunching of the inter-Burundian dialogue in Entebbe, Uganda, on behalf of the East African Community (EAC). Participants included representatives of the Government of Burundi, the ruling National Council for the Defence of Democracy-Forces for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD-FDD) party, opposition actors from within and outside the country, civil society and faith-based organizations. Also in attendance were officials from the African Union, EAC, the European Union, the United Nations and the diplomatic corps. President Museveni encouraged the parties to engage in dialogue and to find a political solution to the ongoing crisis. He invited the parties to resume talks in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, on 6 January 2016. The Government of Burundi, however, expressed concern about the proposed date and the participants in the dialogue. Acting on behalf of President Museveni, the Minister of Defence of Uganda, Crispus Kiyonga, supported by the Tanzanian Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Augustin Mahiga, in his capacity as Chair of the EAC Council of Ministers, consulted the Government of Burundi in order to reach consensus on the resumption of the dialogue. At the time of finalization of the present report, consultations were still ongoing.

13. On 9 November, I appointed Jamal Benomar as my Special Adviser. Since his appointment, Mr. Benomar has focused his attention on coordinating United Nations efforts to help resolve the crisis in Burundi. He travelled to Burundi several times and met senior Government officials, opposition leaders, civil society and the diplomatic corps. He also visited Uganda to engage the Facilitator of the EAC-led dialogue and travelled to Rwanda and the African Union headquarters in Ethiopia.

14. The situation in Burundi also featured prominently in the agenda of the meetings of the Inter-Ministerial Committees of Defence and Foreign Affairs of the

ICGLR held in Luanda on 10 and 11 February 2016. The Ministers of Defence and Ministers for Foreign Affairs of ICGLR member States reviewed the security situation in the region, notably in Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan. The Ministers for Foreign Affairs also took the opportunity to review a list of candidates for the post of Executive Secretary of ICGLR to replace Alphonse Ntumba Luaba of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, whose tenure ended in December 2015. At the request of the Government of Angola, the sixth Ordinary Summit of the ICGLR was rescheduled to the end of March 2016.

B. Humanitarian situation

15. The humanitarian situation resulting from the influx of some 245,000 refugees from Burundi into neighbouring countries since April 2015 remains a matter of concern and priority. Countries in the subregion, especially the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania, have been hosting large refugee populations and deserve greater international support to attend to the needs of the refugees. The reported recruitment of Burundian youth for armed groups, including in refugee camps, directly undermines the civilian character of asylum and strains relations between Governments in the region. Inside Burundi, the crisis has exacerbated the situation faced by an already vulnerable population that includes 25,000 internally displaced persons. Protection of civilians is a growing concern; over 445 people have been killed since violence erupted in April 2015. The country's instability has also caused the deterioration of already fragile livelihoods, with the result that some 3.6 million people are considered food insecure and 150,000 children under 5 years of age acutely malnourished.

16. The humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo also remains dire, especially in the eastern provinces, where new displacement has occurred daily, owing to the activities of armed groups, military operations against them, ongoing intercommunal violence and the influx of refugees from neighbouring countries. Some 1.5 million people have been internally displaced, while 7.5 million people are in need of assistance throughout the country. The forced closure of the site for internally displaced persons in Mukoto, North Kivu, on 12 January 2016 caused new displacement. The humanitarian community has offered to support the Government to ensure that it upholds its international obligations on human rights and humanitarian principles, especially with regard to the closure of sites for internally displaced persons.

17. Meanwhile, over 400,000 Congolese refugees remain in protracted exile in neighbouring countries. The conflict in South Sudan has also caused the displacement of nearly 5,000 South Sudanese refugees from the state of Western Equatoria in South Sudan to Dungu territory in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

C. Human rights and judicial cooperation

18. The rapidly deteriorating human rights situation in Burundi remains a key concern. On 17 December 2015, the Human Rights Council, in its resolution S-24/1, called on the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to urgently dispatch a mission to swiftly investigate alleged violations and abuses in Burundi

and make recommendations to improve the situation. The African Union also committed to deploy human rights observers and military experts to the country.

19. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, security and intelligence officers have reportedly clamped down on activists and political opponents opposed to changes to the country's constitutional provision on presidential term limits. As indicated above, the security situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo remains volatile, with armed groups, particularly the Allied Democratic Forces and FDLR, carrying out deadly attacks on civilians and committing acts of sexual violence.

20. Efforts to hold individuals accountable for crimes committed in the region are ongoing and demonstrate effective cooperation in judicial matters. The trial of Bosco Ntaganda, who was charged with war crimes and crimes against humanity allegedly committed in Ituri province, Democratic Republic of the Congo, in 2002 and 2003, commenced in September 2015 at the International Criminal Court in The Hague. On 19 December 2015, Thomas Lubanga Dyilo and Germain Katanga were transferred to a prison facility in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to serve their respective prison sentences. This is the first time that the Court has designated a State for the enforcement of prison sentences and demonstrates close cooperation between the Court and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. On 30 December, new charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity were filed against Germain Katanga in the High Military Court in Kinshasa. This is the first case in which new national proceedings have been brought against an individual already convicted by the International Criminal Court.

21. In January 2016, a hearing was held at the International Criminal Court in The Hague to determine whether to confirm war crimes and crimes against humanity charges, including sexual violence and recruitment of child soldiers in Uganda, against former Lord's Resistance Army leader Dominic Ongwen. The Court also announced that it would issue its verdict in the case of Jean-Pierre Bemba, former President and Commander-in-Chief of the Mouvement de libération du Congo on 21 March 2016. Mr. Bemba was charged for crimes allegedly committed in the Central African Republic in 2002 and 2003.

III. Implementation of the commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework

A. Commitments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

22. Information on the status of implementation of the national commitments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is contained in my report on MONUSCO of 9 March 2016 (S/2016/233).

B. Commitments of the region

23. Most signatory States to the Framework upheld their commitment "not to interfere in the internal affairs of neighbouring countries" (see S/2013/131, annex) during the reporting period; however, the Government of Burundi has accused its Rwandan counterpart of recruiting young people in refugee camps in Rwanda and

encouraging incursions into Burundi by armed elements through the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

24. The Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda held a bilateral meeting in Kigali on 23 and 24 September to review the security challenges facing the two countries and agree on comprehensive strategies to address them. In a joint communiqué, they: (a) called on the Chiefs of Defence Staff of the two countries, supported by their respective military intelligence units, to develop practical ways to eradicate FDLR; (b) requested the establishment of a joint bilateral team on repatriation of ex-M23 combatants cantoned in Rwanda and FDLR combatants present in the Bahuma transit camp in Kisangani, Democratic Republic of the Congo; and (c) agreed to hold bilateral ministerial security meetings on a regular basis. National and international institutions were invited to support the process. The implementation of the decisions adopted during the meeting is still pending.

25. With regard to the commitment made by signatory States to facilitate the administration of justice through judicial cooperation (ibid.), the Congolese National Police arrested Ladislas Ntaganzwa on 8 December 2015, pursuant to an arrest warrant and order to transfer issued by the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals on 7 May 2014. Mr. Ntaganzwa had been indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda for genocide, direct and public incitement to commit genocide, and crimes against humanity, in connection with his actions during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. He had been at large since 19 June 1996 and was allegedly living in North Kivu under the protection of FDLR.

26. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has expressed its readiness to extradite Mr. Ntaganzwa to Rwanda pursuant to the warrant, provided, however, that the Government of Rwanda reciprocates by transferring the former leader of the National Congress for the Defence of the People, Laurent Nkunda, as well as other Congolese nationals who are the subject of arrest warrants issued by the Democratic Republic of the Congo. On a related note, little progress was made in bringing to justice six ex-M23 members who are sought on Congolese arrest warrants for war crimes and crimes against humanity and who are also listed on sanctions lists of the Security Council and the Government of the United States of America.

C. International commitments

27. As part of their collective effort to support the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, the Team of International Envoys and Representatives for the Great Lakes Region visited Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda from 9 to 15 December 2015. Their planned visit to Burundi was cancelled following a request by the Government to postpone this segment of the journey. The team comprised Assistant Secretary-General Modibo Touré, representing Special Envoy Said Djinnit; my Special Representative in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Head of MONUSCO, Maman Sidikou; the United States Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, Thomas Perriello; the European Union Senior Coordinator for the Great Lakes Region, Koen Vervaeke; and a representative of the African Union Special Representative for the Great Lakes region.

28. In their interaction with various regional stakeholders, the envoys expressed concern over the worsening security situation in Burundi, as well as the rise in violence and human rights abuses. They expressed their support for the EAC-led mediation. The envoys also conducted field visits to Kisangani, Beni and Goma, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In Beni, the envoys met with the mayor and members of his local security committee. They seized the opportunity to extend their condolences to the local community, which continues to bear the brunt of atrocities committed by the Allied Democratic Forces. In Kisangani, the envoys met with a group of ex-FDLR elements cantoned in Bahuma camp and encouraged them to accept being repatriated to Rwanda, their country of origin, without precondition. In Goma, the envoys met the Vice-Governor of North Kivu, among others. The discussions revolved around the neutralization of armed groups, with a focus on the FARDC-led operations against FDLR and other local armed groups. Both sides agreed on the urgent need to resume military cooperation between MONUSCO and FARDC. The envoys and representatives were also briefed on the work of the Extended Joint Verification Mechanism by the body's Deputy Commander.

29. The implementation of the World Bank Great Lakes Initiative, for a total commitment of $1.4 billion, has significantly advanced during the reporting period. Six projects costing $717.2 million, which are intended to reduce vulnerability and build resilience, on the one hand, and improve economic opportunities through economic cooperation and integration, on the other, have been approved and are in the early stages of implementation. Four other projects in the same areas, costing $537 million, are at an advanced stage of preparation.

30. A number of analytical studies, funded by the World Bank and the Office of my Special Envoy, were helpful in designing projects under the Great Lakes Initiative. These included studies in the following areas: (a) addressing forced displacement; (b) improving social protection for vulnerable groups, including women; (c) enhancing food security; (d) improving access to health services; (e) supporting demobilization and reintegration of armed groups; (f) enhancing access to energy; (g) improving agricultural productivity; (h) expanding infrastructure to support increased productivity and trade; and (i) removing barriers to trade.

D. Oversight mechanisms of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework

31. The Technical Support Committee of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework met on 14 January 2016 in Nairobi to review developments in the region, notably the dialogue processes in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the peace process in South Sudan. The Committee also discussed the neutralization of negative forces in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, including FDLR and the Allied Democratic Forces. The meeting further reviewed the matter of the repatriation of ex-M23 combatants from Uganda and Rwanda and the implementation of the Nairobi Declarations.

32. Building on lessons from previous high-level Regional Oversight Mechanism meetings and on the outcomes of the ministerial retreat on the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, held in Nairobi on 10 July 2015, members of the Technical Support Committee considered proposals to improve the meetings of the Mechanism and the Committee and to strengthen ownership of the Framework by its signatories.

The Committee's recommendations were submitted to the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the region for consideration.

33. On 28 January 2016, my Special Envoy and the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security convened a ministerial meeting of signatory States and witnesses/guarantors of the Framework, in the margins of the twenty-eighth ordinary session of the African Union Executive Council, held in Addis Ababa on 27 and 28 January. The meeting was chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Angola. Participants included the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. South Africa was represented by its Minister of Defence and Uganda was represented by its Minister for Regional Cooperation. The Congo, Kenya, Rwanda and the Sudan were represented by senior officials from their Ministries for Foreign Affairs and Defence. In addition, representatives of the African Union, ICGLR, SADC and the United Nations participated. Participants reviewed developments in the region and discussed steps to enhance ownership and strengthen the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework.

34. The Ministers also endorsed the recommendations of the Technical Support Committee to strengthen the governing mechanisms of the Framework, notably by: (a) dissociating the Regional Oversight Mechanism meetings from the African Union summit and the United Nations General Assembly; (b) organizing one annual meeting of the Mechanism as a stand-alone event in a signatory State; (c) convening thematic ministerial meetings, as necessary, to address relevant challenges; and (d) convening meetings of Ministers for Foreign Affairs, ahead of future meetings of the Mechanism, to lay the groundwork for subsequent discussions and decisions by Heads of State and Government.

35. The ministerial meeting further welcomed the recent elections in the United Republic of Tanzania, as well as the progress achieved in the peace process in South Sudan. It also welcomed progress in the peace process in the Central African Republic and urged the parties to continue their efforts. Participants expressed their full support for the ongoing EAC-led dialogue on Burundi. They further welcomed the decision by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to resume military cooperation between FARDC and MONUSCO.

IV. Activities of my Special Envoy

36. During the reporting period, my Special Envoy continued to promote the implementation of key aspects of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. His office successfully organized the Great Lakes Private Sector Investment Conference on 24 and 25 February 2016 in Kinshasa in partnership with ICGLR. Furthermore, my Special Envoy undertook consultations to support national dialogue processes in the region, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He also continued to support the neutralization of negative forces and used his good offices to facilitate the implementation of the Nairobi Declarations, particularly the repatriation of ex-M23 combatants from Rwanda and Uganda. My Special Envoy also took steps to strengthen his collaboration with regional organizations, promote women, youth and civil society, and help find durable solutions to refugee issues in the region.

A. Great Lakes Private Sector Investment Conference

37. During the period under review, my Special Envoy proceeded with preparations for the first Great Lakes Private Sector Investment Conference. In October 2015, his Office collaborated with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and other partners on a knowledge share fair on gender equality in the extractive industries. On 16 and 17 October, in Nairobi, my Special Envoy joined ICGLR and UN-Women in organizing a regional forum to explore ways in which small and medium-sized enterprises in the region could benefit from the Conference. Together with various partners, the Office of my Special Envoy also organized private and public road shows to promote the Conference and attract global investors at key high-level events in Belgium, Ethiopia, the United Arab Emirates and the United States of America. My Special Envoy also convened several meetings of the Steering Committee of the Conference, which was established in September 2015 to oversee preparations for the Conference. Furthermore, he held meetings with Congolese government officials, including President Joseph Kabila, Prime Minister Matata Ponyo and Minister for Foreign Affairs Raymond Tshibanda.

38. On 24 February, I joined President Joseph Kabila at the opening ceremony of the Great Lakes Private Sector Investment Conference. In my address, I underscored the importance of combining peace consolidation efforts with initiatives to rebuild the economic fabric of communities and provide tangible peace dividends for all. I also called upon the leaders of the region to work together towards inclusive development and shared prosperity. Panel discussions focused on opportunities and challenges in the seven economic sectors highlighted for investment, namely, agriculture, energy, finances, infrastructure, information and communications technologies, mining and tourism. Experts led plenary sessions on promoting responsible business and improving the investment climate in the Great Lakes region. Many business-to-business, government-to-business and government-to-government meetings took place in the margins of the Conference, notably a meeting between the Prime Ministers of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. My Special Envoy will follow up with Framework signatories, witnesses/guarantors and other partners to establish or strengthen mechanisms to build on the outcomes of the Conference.

B. Support to dialogue processes in the region

39. From 2 to 10 December 2015, at my request, my Special Envoy visited Kinshasa, Brussels and Addis Ababa, where he conducted broad consultations regarding the proposed national dialogue to be held in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In Kinshasa, he met with senior government officials, including President Kabila, the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, the Minister of Justice, the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the National Assembly. He also met with representatives of the presidential majority, opposition leaders, faith-based organizations, civil society, members of the Security Council, other members of the diplomatic corps and Framework signatories. In addition, my Special Envoy separately met with leaders of the opposition party Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social, the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security and senior representatives of the European Union. During his meetings, my Special Envoy

sought to clarify his interlocutors' expectations regarding the role of a possible United Nations facilitator of the proposed dialogue. He further sought their views on the prospects for a credible and inclusive dialogue in the country's current political context. My Special Envoy subsequently summarized the findings and outcomes of his consultations in a report that he submitted to me. Subsequently, the African Union appointed Edem Kodjo, former Prime Minister of Togo, to serve as facilitator of the national dialogue. The Office of my Special Envoy and MONUSCO will support the African Union facilitation as needed.

C. Cooperation with regional partners

40. On 21 September 2015, my Special Envoy met with the President of Angola, José Eduardo dos Santos, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Angola, Georges Chicoti, in Luanda. Discussions focused on issues of importance in the Great Lakes region, notably the neutralization of negative forces; the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi; and ongoing efforts to strengthen the functioning of the governance structures of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. President dos Santos suggested the holding of a high-level meeting to address the slow progress in the implementation of the Nairobi Declarations and the neutralization of FDLR.

41. To strengthen the governing mechanisms of the Framework and enhance the partnership of his Office with the African Union Commission, my Special Envoy met the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, on 25 November. With regard to the governing mechanisms of the Framework, Ms. Dlamini-Zuma called for greater involvement by the Ministers responsible for the implementation of decisions made by the Heads of State and Government. She called on the United Nations, the African Union, ICGLR and SADC, as witnesses/guarantors, to conduct an assessment of the Framework, with a view to making results-oriented recommendations to advance its implementation.

42. My Special Envoy also built on his partnerships with the Ministers of Defence and Foreign Affairs of the region during the reporting period. During an extraordinary meeting of ICGLR Ministers of Defence, held in Kinshasa on 18 November, my Special Envoy conveyed strong United Nations support for the full and rapid implementation of the Nairobi Declarations, as well as for initiatives aimed at neutralizing negative forces operating in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. On 11 February 2016, my Special Envoy participated in a meeting of ICGLR Ministers for Foreign Affairs (also known as Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee), during which he reiterated United Nations support to member States in addressing ongoing peace and security challenges in the region, notably the situations in Burundi, the Central African Republic and the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. He also briefed the meeting on preparations for the Great Lakes Private Sector Investment Conference and recalled the recommendations adopted by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Framework signatory States during their meeting in Addis Ababa on 28 January.

D. Regional strategic framework in support of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework

43. The Office of my Special Envoy continued to collaborate with United Nations country teams, regional offices and development partners to establish a regional strategic framework for the Great Lakes region. The integrated approach taken in the framework will, inter alia, help relevant agencies provide timely and more effective responses to crises in the region. The strategic framework comprises six pillars, namely: (a) sustainable natural resources management; (b) economic integration, cross-border trade and food nutrition security; (c) mobility; (d) youth and adolescents; (e) sexual and gender-based violence; and (f) justice and conflict prevention.

44. In this context, my Special Envoy, together with the United Nations Development Programme Assistant Administrator and Director, Regional Bureau for Africa, and Chair of the Regional United Nations Development Group for Africa, Abdoulaye Mar Dieye, convened a meeting in Nairobi on 7 December 2015 to validate the regional strategic framework. The meeting brought together United Nations resident coordinators in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania; United Nations regional directors; country representatives of agencies, funds and programmes; heads of subregional organizations; and representatives of regional organizations, including ICGLR, EAC, SADC, the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa.

45. The participants in the meeting concluded that the strategic framework had passed the test of relevance, resilience and implementability. They further noted that national budgets, development plans and the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks should be aligned with the strategic framework. They also urged other signatories to the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework to emulate the national implementation mechanisms in place in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The meeting recommended that United Nations country teams in the region collaborate on cross-border initiatives that leverage comparative advantages and meet the region's needs in the areas of confidence-building and promotion of shared prosperity. In the same vein, the need for better collaboration and synergies with regional organizations was highlighted.

E. Promotion of women, youth and civil society organizations

46. During the reporting period, the Office of my Special Envoy undertook a field mission to monitor the activities of grass-roots women's organizations that were funded through the Women's Platform for the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. These organizations are located in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda. The outcome of the mission included the following recommendations: (a) stabilization and peace consolidation initiatives in the region should tap the significant potential of groups and individuals at the community level; (b) local communities should be informed about the outcomes of high-level meetings related to the Framework; (c) the Framework signatories should widely disseminate their commitments and related activities in local languages at the community level; and (d) grass-roots women's organizations should participate in regional meetings discussing the Framework, as well as national peace and dialogue processes.

47. On 30 November 2015, my Special Envoy chaired the fourth meeting of the Advisory Board of the Women's Platform for the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework via videoconference. In attendance was my Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, as well as representatives of UN-Women, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Oak Foundation, MONUSCO, the Fonds pour les femmes congolaises, the Ministry of Gender, Family and Children's Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the ICGLR Regional Women's Forum. The meeting commended the field monitoring exercise. With regard to funding for the Women's Platform, Advisory Board members noted that current funding had been exhausted and called for collective action to mobilize new resources under my Special Envoy's leadership.

48. On 16 and 17 October 2015, the Office of my Special Envoy, ICGLR, the Pan-African Chamber of Commerce and Industry and UN-Women jointly organized a Regional Forum for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises from the Great Lakes region. The Forum brought together more than 50 representatives of small and medium-sized enterprises from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. Participants discussed how small and medium-sized enterprises could participate in the Great Lakes Regional Private Sector Forum and the Great Lakes Private Sector Investment Conference, as well as how they could support the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. Participants underscored the important role of small and medium-sized enterprises in generating jobs and transformative economic initiatives for the benefit of women and youth in the Great Lakes region.

49. On 14 and 15 December 2015, the ICGLR Regional Civil Society Forum organized the first meeting of its newly constituted Coordination Committee, in Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania. The meeting brought together the Chairs of the ICGLR National Civil Society Forums of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia, along with representatives from Burundi, the Central African Republic and the ICGLR Regional Centre for Democracy and Good Governance. At the end of the two-day meeting, the Coordination Committee agreed to submit a request to the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania to host the secretariat of the Forum.

50. My Special Envoy also continued to engage non-State actors in support of the Framework. On 27 January 2016, he met with civil society representatives in Addis Ababa during a meeting organized by Oxfam International, before the twenty-eighth ordinary session of the African Union Executive Council. The meeting offered my Special Envoy an opportunity to engage directly with advocacy groups and other non-governmental actors involved in the promotion of peace and stability in the Great Lakes region. This year's discussion centred on ways to facilitate genuine dialogue between civil society, women, youth and leaders at local, national and regional levels to promote, peace, stability and development.

F. Promotion of durable solutions for refugees and internally displaced persons

51. Protracted forced displacement remains a major challenge in the region, owing to political instability and the activities of armed groups, which force civilians to become internally displaced persons or refugees. At the same time, persistent

insecurity remains a significant impediment to the implementation of durable solutions for the displaced in the subregion. Recognizing that durable solutions for refugees and internally displaced persons will require concerted efforts by political, humanitarian and development partners, my Special Envoy has continued to work with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Bank and others to develop new solutions to protracted displacement that safeguard the dignity of displaced persons and provide them better opportunities, while delivering greater benefits to host communities.

V. Observations and recommendations

52. Notwithstanding some positive developments during the reporting period, the Great Lakes region continues to face major political, security and humanitarian challenges. I am particularly preoccupied by the continuing existence of several armed groups, including FDLR and the Allied Democratic Forces, in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, despite efforts by FARDC and MONUSCO to neutralize them. The continued threat to civilians by armed groups, the stalled repatriation of ex-M23 combatants and dependants, the slow implementation of the Nairobi Declarations and the crisis in Burundi remain sources of tension between Governments in the region.

53. I urge the signatory States to fully implement their commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, the objective of which is to tackle the root causes of instability in the region. In this regard, a top priority should be to decisively conclude the neutralization of armed groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Effective military cooperation between FARDC and MONUSCO would go a long way toward realizing this important objective. Once again, I commend the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and FARDC for their sacrifices and their actions against armed groups. I welcome the arrangement reached on 28 January 2016 for the resumption of military cooperation between FARDC and MONUSCO and look forward to its implementation.

54. Renewed commitment and efforts will be required by all Member States in order to address the impact of negative forces and the challenges discussed in the present report. I urge the signatory States to abide by their commitments under the Framework, in particular the commitment to "neither tolerate nor provide assistance or support of any kind to armed groups" (see S/2013/131, annex). In this regard, I am deeply troubled by repeated allegations of recruitment, training and infiltration of Burundian rebel groups in neighbouring countries. I encourage ICGLR member States to investigate and address these allegations through existing regional mechanisms, such as the Extended Joint Verification Mechanism. I encourage the Governments of the region, particularly those of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, and Uganda, to bilaterally address the security challenges confronting their countries, particularly issues related to armed groups and the repatriation of ex-M23. I welcome the reports of improved judicial cooperation between the States of the region and trust that efforts to fight impunity will intensify in the months and years ahead. My Special Envoy remains available to support these efforts.

55. The situation in Burundi remains a major source of concern in the absence of an inclusive political dialogue. I deplore the continued loss of life and urge all Burundians, especially security and defence forces, to exercise maximum restraint. I

urge the Burundian authorities to protect the rights of all Burundians and ensure that human rights teams from the African Union and the United Nations are able to carry out independent investigations in an expeditious manner. I encourage all concerned stakeholders to engage in a genuine, inclusive dialogue. I commend President Museveni of Uganda for his efforts in this regard and the Governments of Angola and the United Republic of Tanzania, for their support. As demonstrated by the visit of the Security Council to Burundi in January and my own visit in February, the United Nations, together with EAC and the African Union, will continue to assist the people of Burundi and provide technical and political support to mediation efforts in order to return the country to the path of stability and development.

56. The past six months have seen a number of electoral processes in the Great Lakes region. Elections will continue to be held in the region over the next two years, and the risk of attendant instability cannot be ruled out. Electoral processes must take place in a fair, transparent, inclusive and non-violent manner. I call on national authorities in the region to make it a priority to prevent human rights violations and outbreaks of violence before, during and after elections. At the same time, I urge the people of the region to refrain from using violence to resolve electoral disputes and to engage in constructive dialogue with their Governments instead.

57. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is entering a crucial period marked by preparations for a national dialogue ahead of upcoming general elections. I reiterate my call for any dialogue to be inclusive and enable stakeholders to discuss contentious issues in a climate of openness and mutual respect. I urge all Congolese to commit to resolving their differences through dialogue and consultations, with a view to creating the conditions for peaceful, inclusive and credible elections in an environment that provides adequate political space and in which human rights are respected. I express the full support of the United Nations for the former Prime Minister of Togo, Edem Kodjo, in his role as facilitator of the national dialogue.

58. Progress in economic cooperation will no doubt contribute significantly to peace and confidence-building in the region. The just-concluded Great Lakes Private Sector Investment Conference was held at an opportune moment, as it came in the wake of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. I welcome this important initiative, which sets the stage for a new era of economic integration in the region. I commend my Special Envoy, ICGLR, the signatory States, and the witnesses/guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for their continued commitment to the Framework.

59. I encourage the Governments of the region to create an environment conducive to business and investments that are responsible, sustainable and aligned with the Framework, the United Nations Global Compact and other pertinent instruments. This is essential for long-term economic growth and confidence-building. I call on African private sector leaders to strengthen productive capacity, create decent jobs and livelihoods, improve economic governance and foster inclusive development and shared prosperity to ensure durable peace and development. I call on international partners to help integrate the region into international value chains that transform the nature of exports from raw materials to value-added exports. Furthermore, I invite business leaders and investors worldwide to join the people of the Great Lakes region in building bridges to regional integration that will create larger markets and pools of resources.

60. I welcome the efforts of my Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, the Special Representative for the Great Lakes Region of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Technical Support Committee to reinvigorate the governing structures of the Framework and strengthen the signatories' ownership. These efforts should now be translated into concrete actions and deliverables. I am glad that the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of signatory States and the guarantors of the Framework, at their meeting in Addis Ababa on 28 January, endorsed the recommendations made by the Technical Support Committee to operationalize the decisions of the Regional Oversight Mechanism.

61. Lastly, I thank my Special Envoy and his Office for their continuous efforts to monitor and coordinate the implementation of the Framework in a challenging regional context. I call upon the Security Council and the international community to remain engaged and assist the signatory States with the implementation of their commitments.

United Nations S/2016/233*

Security Council

Distr.: General
9 March 2016

Original: English

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 43 of Security Council resolution 2211 (2015). It covers major developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo since my report of 24 December 2015 (S/2015/1031), including with regard to the situation on the ground, progress made by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the implementation of its commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, the electoral process and progress made by the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in the implementation of its mandate. The report also includes an update on progress in the strategic dialogue between MONUSCO and the Government and the joint development of an exit strategy for MONUSCO.

II. Major developments

A. Political situation

2. The electoral impasse persisted with mistrust deepening around the proposal by President Joseph Kabila to hold a national dialogue in order to address the stalled process. Political parties that are members of the presidential majority continued to support the national dialogue process. On 28 December 2015, in Kinshasa, the spokesperson for the Parti lumumbiste unifié (PALU), a member party of the presidential majority, stated at a press conference that PALU was in "full support" of the national dialogue, as it would help resolve issues linked to the electoral process. On 4 January 2016, in Kinshasa, during a march commemorating martyrs of the liberation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Henri Mova Sakanyi, the leader of the Parti du peuple pour la reconstruction et la démocratie, the dominant political party in the presidential majority, called on all national stakeholders to support and participate in the national dialogue proposed by President Kabila.

3. Opposition parties continued to voice concern that the national dialogue could be used by the Government to prolong the stay of the President in office beyond

* Reissued for technical reasons on 15 March 2016.

16-03552* (E) 150316

Please recycle

November 2016 or lead to a change in the Constitution to abolish the two-term presidential limit. The Front citoyen 2016, an opposition coalition that was established on 30 December 2015 bringing together civil society organizations, citizen groups and the main opposition parties and platforms, including G7 (a group of seven dissident political parties) and the Dynamique de l'opposition, announced that it would reject participation in the national dialogue, called for respect of the Constitution and opposed any slippage in the electoral calendar and a third term in office for President Kabila. As mentioned in my last report, the President of the Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social (UDPS), Etienne Tshisekedi, called for the appointment of an international facilitator as a condition for UDPS to participate in the dialogue. He reiterated his request in a communiqué issued on 31 December.

4. In that increasingly polarized political context, both the opposition and the presidential majority, each supported by a segment of civil society, announced a series of demonstrations in February 2016. On 8 January, the Dynamique de l'opposition announced a timetable for organizing a series of peaceful demonstrations between January and March to support the holding of transparent and credible elections and to protest against any slippage in the electoral calendar or attempt to change the Constitution.

5. On 14 January 2016, the African Union issued a statement that conveyed the support of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, for President Kabila's initiative to hold a national dialogue. The statement announced the appointment of former Prime Minister of Togo and member of the African Union Panel of the Wise, Edem Kodjo, to hold consultations in Kinshasa for the launching of the dialogue. In a joint statement issued on 18 January in response, the opposition platforms G7 and the Dynamique de l'opposition noted that the communiqué of the African Union had failed to reflect the actual situation on the ground and regretted that it had not made any reference to respect for the Constitution and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance. On the same day, UDPS underlined the need to hold a national dialogue to prevent President Kabila from running for a third term. On 20 January, the Government issued a statement welcoming the position of the African Union and the mission of Mr. Kodjo. In the same statement, the Minister of Information and spokesperson for the Government, Lambert Mende, noted the "encouragement and support" of the African Union, the Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo and the United Nations for "promoting the holding of a national dialogue" that would foster an environment conducive to peaceful and transparent elections.

6. The African Union envoy undertook initial consultations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 19 to 22 January 2016. He met with President Kabila on 19 January, following which he held three days of consultations with national stakeholders. While G7 and Dynamique de l'opposition platforms, along with the Front citoyen 2016, declined invitations to meet with him, Eve Bazaiba, from the Mouvement de libération du Congo, a member party of the Dynamique de l'opposition, met with the envoy. She reportedly reiterated the position of the platform against the holding of the national dialogue, highlighting the risk that it would be used to circumvent the Constitution and prolong the stay of President Kabila in power beyond 2016.

7. On 4 February 2016, Mr. Kodjo met with UDPS President, Etienne Tshisekedi in Brussels in an effort to encourage him to commit to the launching of the national dialogue. Following the meeting, Mr. Tshisekedi issued a communiqué stating that

UDPS was adhering to the Constitution and was committed to a "democratic alternative to power in 2016", while rejecting a dialogue that had been unilaterally planned by President Kabila. On 6 February, Mr. Kodjo returned to Kinshasa for another round of consultations with the Government, political parties and other actors.

8. On 16 February 2016, the African Union, the European Union, the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie and the United Nations issued a joint communiqué urging all Congolese political actors to spare no effort, within the framework of the country's Constitution, to ensure the successful holding of elections, preserve peace and deepen democracy, including through a political process. The communiqué recalled that the decision by the African Union to appoint Mr. Kodjo as Special Envoy and that his efforts on the ground fell within the framework of the relevant instruments of the African Union, including the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance. The communiqué also stressed the importance of dialogue and urged all Congolese political actors to extend their full cooperation to the African Union envoy. In response, G7 indicated in a statement issued on 20 February its readiness to participate in direct negotiations among political actors rather than in the dialogue proposed by President Kabila. G7 also called on the four organizations that had co-signed the communiqué to do everything possible to ensure that President Kabila would respect the Constitution. Furthermore, G7, while welcoming the mention of the African Union Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, regretted that the communiqué had failed to mention the "massive human rights violations and restrictions on individual and public freedoms" in the country. On 21 February, the Secretary-General of the presidential majority and Speaker of the National Assembly, Aubin Minaku, expressed regret at the refusal by the opposition to take part in the national dialogue and indicated that the proposal by G7 (in its 20 February statement) to appoint an interim President if presidential elections were postponed beyond November 2016 would violate the Constitution. On 22 February, media reports indicated that Toussaint Tshilombo, former Minister of Information and senior member of the Parti du peuple pour la reconstruction et la démocratie, had said that the 16 January joint communiqué had mentioned the "timely" holding of elections and not adherence to constitutional timeframes.

9. As foreshadowed in the timetable announced by the Dynamique de l'opposition coalition for a series of peaceful demonstrations (see para. 4 above), the opposition staged a "ville morte" protest on 16 February 2016, which was observed mainly in Bukavu, Goma, Kinshasa, Moba and Uvira, and to a lesser extent in Lubumbashi and Mbuji-Mayi. In Kinshasa, police were stationed at major intersections, while some shops were closed or opened later in the morning. No major incidents were reported. Assessments of the outcome were polarized: the presidential majority characterized it as a "resounding failure", while opposition parties declared it a success and urged President Kabila to draw appropriate conclusions from the "widespread mobilization".

10. MONUSCO registered over 45 arrests of individuals in Goma, Kinshasa, Lubumbashi and Uvira in relation to the protest. Many of those arrested were civil society activists or opposition members, including a member of Parliament, Martin Fayulu, who was temporarily detained ahead of the "ville morte" protest on 14 February. While the majority of those arrested were subsequently released without charges, including Martin Fayulu, the trial of six members of the Lutte pour le changement movement before a magistrates' court in Goma commenced on

18 February. On 24 February, each was sentenced to two years in prison. On 5 March, an appellate court in Goma reduced each sentence to six months.

11. During my visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, from 23 to 24 February 2016, I met with President Kabila, his Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and with representatives of political parties in the ruling coalition, the opposition and civil society. I encouraged all parties to pursue dialogue and exercise restraint in addressing the challenges related to the electoral process, with a view to upholding the principles enshrined in the Constitution.

12. Throughout the period under review, my Special Representative continued to use his good offices to promote political dialogue among political actors across the spectrum and representatives of civil society, encouraging stakeholders to reach a consensus to overcome the impasse on elections. He also urged all parties to resolve their differences through peaceful means and to avoid violence.

13. My Special Representative further intensified his engagement with President Kabila, who indicated his readiness to enhance cooperation with MONUSCO and to re-engage in discussions on the joint development of an exit strategy for MONUSCO. Two meetings on that matter took place between the MONUSCO leadership and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Raymond Tshibanda. On 11 January 2016, President Kabila authorized the resumption of cooperation between the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) and MONUSCO in operations against armed groups. On 28 January, MONUSCO and the Government signed a technical arrangement outlining the modalities of that cooperation, and on 23 February FARDC command issued an operational order to implement the arrangement and resume MONUSCO-supported neutralization operations.

14. The Government continued its efforts towards implementation of its national commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. On 31 December 2015, President Kabila signed two presidential decrees, pardoning nine members of the political-religious movement Bundu Dia Kongo who were serving life sentences, as well as all prisoners, foreign and Congolese alike, of 70 years of age or older who were not serving sentences for violent crimes. On 5 January 2016, the Minister of Justice, Alexis Thambwe, announced that 1,200 low-level offenders who had served at least one quarter of their sentences would be released, indicating that that decision and the presidential decrees were aimed at easing the political situation ahead of the national dialogue. With regard to decentralization, some measures were taken by the Government to implement the 9 December 2015 decree defining the responsibilities of the special commissioners appointed in November to administer the 21 new provinces until provincial and gubernatorial elections were held. The implementing directives accompanying the decree were issued to the commissioners on 7 January 2016. Finally, in the area of security sector reform, the draft Programmatic Law on the Armed Forces that had been pending since 2013 was reviewed by an interministerial committee and President Kabila.

15. MONUSCO continued to support the implementation of the national commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. Through international coordination mechanisms, MONUSCO continued its efforts to promote coherence in the provision of assistance to the Government on security sector reform by international partners. Some progress was achieved in strengthening the logistics capacity of FARDC. However, additional funds need to be allocated by the Government to support and sustain FARDC operations.

B. Preparation for elections

16. The National Independent Electoral Commission continued to experience difficulties with electoral preparations, resulting in continued delays. According to its president, Corneille Nangaa, the main constraints were the need to amend the legislative framework, the pending disbursement of funds by the Government and an outstanding political decision on options for a partial or full revision of the voters' registry.

17. On 10 January 2016, the president of the Commission indicated in the media that the Commission was working on a revised electoral calendar and that the projected timeline would likely extend beyond the constitutional timeframe for the presidential election. On 14 January, the G7 platform held a press conference, condemning the statement as "playing into the hands of the presidential majority and intentionally violating the Constitution". The platform proposed a calendar for holding provincial, legislative and presidential elections simultaneously during the last quarter of 2016 to ensure that the constitutional time frame would be respected. G7 also called on the Government to assume its responsibilities for resolving obstacles preventing the Commission from moving forward with the organization of elections.

18. On 2 February 2016, the Prime Minister, Matata Ponyo, announced that $22 million had been disbursed to the Commission, which was followed by a second disbursement of $20 million on 18 February. On 10 February, the Commission announced the launch of an invitation to tender for the acquisition of equipment and services for the updating of the voters' registry and the publication of a calendar for the indirect election of governors and deputy governors of the 21 new provinces, to be held on 26 March.

19. On 28 January, in a meeting with international partners, the Commission announced its decision to undertake a complete revision of the voters' registry, initially projected to take about 16 months. Some partners expressed concern about the timeline. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, Evariste Boshab, confirmed that the Government had committed to disbursing $300 million to the Commission for electoral preparations. A number of donors indicated their readiness to support the revision of the voters' registry, provided that an agreed electoral calendar and a disbursement plan for Government funds to the Commission were in place.

20. As mentioned in my last report (S/2015/1031), the Commission requested MONUSCO to provide logistical support for the updating of the voters' registry. Further to that request, my Special Representative met with the President of the Commission on 11 January 2016 and with the Vice-President of the Commission, Norbert Katintima, on 26 January to discuss preliminary plans for revising the voters' registry.

21. The multi-partner basket fund for the Projet d'appui au cycle électoral au Congo, managed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), remained funded at only around 6 per cent of the estimated budget of $123.3 million to support the electoral process.

C. Security situation

22. The security situation remained volatile in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, and deteriorated in parts of North Kivu and Ituri provinces. The Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), the Forces démocratiques pour la libération du Rwanda (FDLR), the Union des patriotes pour la défense des innocents and other Mayi-Mayi groups remained active in Beni and Lubero territories (North Kivu), as did the Forces de résistance patriotiques de l'Ituri (FRPI) in Irumu territory and Mayi-Mayi Simba in Mambasa territory (Ituri), constituting a significant threat to civilians.

23. In North Kivu, FARDC focused its efforts on neutralizing ADF through its Sukola I operation. Although weakened, ADF continued its brutal attacks against civilians, FARDC and MONUSCO. Since 24 December 2015, suspected ADF and affiliated elements have staged at least 22 attacks, killing 26 civilians and 18 FARDC soldiers. A serious incident involving suspected ADF elements occurred on 24 December when five civilians were killed in Vemba, east of Mavivi, with another attack on 5 January 2016 in Nyaleke, east of Beni, resulting in the killing of an additional five civilians. On the same day, suspected ADF elements ambushed FARDC soldiers along the Mbau-Kamango road, killing two soldiers and wounding three others. On 13 January, the FARDC position at Opira, south of Eringeti, was attacked by suspected ADF elements, killing six FARDC soldiers, prompting FARDC and MONUSCO to increase patrolling in the area.

24. MONUSCO supported FARDC operations by targeting ADF positions with attack helicopters and artillery on several occasions, resulting in a yet-to-be determined number of ADF casualties. Specific targets were identified by unmanned aerial surveillance systems and in coordination with FARDC. Suspected ADF elements and other armed elements affiliated with the group fired at MONUSCO helicopters in Beni territory on 11 and 16 January 2016. Although the helicopters were struck by gunfire on both occasions, there was no damage or injury reported.

25. The FARDC Sukola II operation against FDLR continued in North and South Kivu provinces without support from MONUSCO. In North Kivu, operations continued to be conducted in the Nyanzale and Tongo areas, in Rutshuru territory, with new operations also launched in southern Lubero and eastern Walikale territories. The thrust of the new operations added to increased tensions between the Hutu and Nande communities, fuelled by a series of attacks by a newly emerging coalition of local Mayi-Mayi groups, which was perceived as supporting the Nande community, on FDLR positions in and around Buleusa and Lusamambo. There were also FDLR counter-attacks in an attempt to regain ground lost to the FARDC and Mayi-Mayi coalitions. On 30 and 31 December 2015, suspected FDLR elements attacked the villages of Bukumbirwa, Buyamusha and Tusala, west of Buleusa, and looted and burned a large number of homes, resulting in a spate of retaliatory killings on both sides, abductions, the mass displacement of civilians and the burning of hundreds of houses. The violence has resulted in the displacement of some 75,000 persons since October 2015. The most serious incident occurred on 7 January 2016, when suspected FDLR elements attacked the village of Miriki, in Lubero territory, killing 16 civilians from the Nande community. Following the attack, tensions between the Hutu and Nande communities in and around the village increased. North Kivu authorities deployed additional officers of the Congolese National Police and FARDC soldiers to the Buleusa and Lusamabo areas in an attempt to facilitate the return of some civilians who had fled the violence.

26. In South Kivu, Sukola II operations continued in Kabare, Kalehe, Mwenga and Shabunda territories, although there were reports that FDLR had returned to parts of Mwenga territory, especially to areas from which FARDC had withdrawn. FARDC continued operations against Mayi-Mayi Raiya-Mutomboki factions in Mwenga and Shabunda territories and Mayi-Mayi Yakutumba in Fizi territory, triggering the surrender of 332 Mayi-Mayi Raiya Mutomboki and Mayi-Mayi Yakutumba elements. MONUSCO received unconfirmed reports of infiltration by armed elements from Burundi and Rwanda, mainly into Uvira territory. FARDC and MONUSCO continued to conduct patrols in the border area between South Kivu and Burundi.

27. In Ituri province, military operations against FRPI continued with the joint FARDC-MONUSCO operation "Clean Sweep" to dismantle FRPI camps in areas northwest of Aveba. FARDC moved a battalion to the region from Kisangani to reinforce its positions. However, suspected FRPI elements continued to pose a serious threat to civilians by conducting violent looting raids and abductions in South Irumu territory. In Mambasa territory, Mayi-Mayi groups continued to attack civilians and loot their property, mainly around mining sites and markets, resulting in the killing of 17 civilians, the wounding of 8 and the rape of 1 woman between 24 December 2015 and 18 February 2016. In addition, relations between the Bila and Nande communities remained strained following the abduction and assassination of a Bila traditional chief by suspected Nande assailants on 13 January. In January, MONUSCO and provincial authorities started a community dialogue programme to prevent the escalation of ethnic tensions in Irumu and Mambasa territories.

28. Tensions and violence re-emerged between the Hema and Lendu communities over issues related to access to land and cattle theft in Irumu territory, resulting in the killing of four members of the Lendu community in December 2015 in the Lagabo area, and one on 26 January 2016 in Tshabo. In addition to sensitization efforts by provincial authorities, MONUSCO engaged with representatives of both communities in Lagabo to advocate for a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

29. Between 150 and 200 elements of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), mainly from the Central African Republic remained in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo as a result of pressure from the African Union Regional Task Force in the Central African Republic. They continued attacks on civilians, including ambushes, lootings and abductions in Ango and Bondo territories in Bas-Uélé province. During the period under review, LRA also abducted 24 persons, mostly for use as porters; 15 of those abducted later escaped. Acts of banditry by unidentified armed elements believed to be Congolese using the modus operandi of LRA and poaching by LRA elements continued in Bas-Uélé and Haut-Uélé provinces. MONUSCO supported FARDC-led operations against residual LRA elements, including by establishing three mobile operating bases in Bangadi, Duru and Faradje, in Haut-Uélé, from 23 December 2015 to 15 January 2016. Together with FARDC troops and the African Union Regional Task Force, the operations focused on gathering intelligence on LRA positions.

30. In Tanganyika province, in South Kivu, Mayi-Mayi elements affiliated with the Yakutumba group launched repeated attacks on the FARDC navy base near Kabimba on the shores of Lake Tanganyika. Although they did not gain control of the base, their presence remained a threat to the local population. Mayi-Mayi Kata-Katanga

also continued to pose a threat to the civilian population in Manono and Moba territories, particularly in areas where FARDC had a limited presence.

Protection of civilians and neutralization of armed groups

31. MONUSCO continued to focus on efforts to protect civilians, including through the neutralization of armed groups in areas of concern. The Mission also continued to carry out some military activities with FARDC, with a particular focus on operations against ADF in the Beni area and FRPI in Ituri province. Four joint MONUSCO assessment missions and two joint protection team missions were carried out to those areas with a view to updating plans and enhancing the protection of civilians under threat. The MONUSCO force conducted day and night patrols and mobile deployments and rehearsed quick air deployments of the rapidly deployable battalions.

32. In Beni territory, the MONUSCO force intervention brigade redeployed one company operating base to enhance security in the town of Erigenti following earlier ADF attacks. MONUSCO police pursued the implementation of its joint strategy with the national police to enhance security in the town of Beni. Joint patrols and training of national police officers contributed to the stabilization of Beni and prevented killings, looting and targeted attacks.

33. Following the suspected FDLR attack on the village of Miriki on 7 January 2016 in Lubero territory, where clashes between FDLR and Mayi-Mayi groups exacerbated ethnic tensions, MONUSCO swiftly reinforced the Miriki company operating base and deployed civilian staff to enhance its protection response. In response to advocacy by MONUSCO, the national authorities redeployed 45 national police officers and reinforced FARDC in the area. MONUSCO also supported the police in securing nearby camps for internally displaced persons and refugees. Threats of retaliatory attacks on a camp of Hutu internally displaced persons sheltered near the company operating base in Miriki were averted through the joint efforts of the Congolese authorities, humanitarian actors and MONUSCO.

34. National, provincial and traditional authorities in Miriki undertook initiatives with MONUSCO support to promote dialogue and reconciliation in southern Lubero territory. In Rutshuru territory, MONUSCO facilitated dialogue among ethnic communities and supported the establishment of a traditional peace committee to improve inter-communal relations. In Kinshasa, MONUSCO met with Hutu and Nande representatives in Parliament to advocate for political action to prevent further violence and find new solutions to neutralizing armed groups in Lubero and surrounding areas.

35. The Community Alert Network system transmitted an average of 190 early warning alerts per month. Ninety per cent of the alerts resulted in a response; the remaining ten per cent received no reply owing to insufficient deployment of FARDC and Congolese police, lack of logistical means available to Congolese security forces, insufficient coordination between MONUSCO and FARDC against ADF and FDLR, and suspects fleeing before response teams arrived.

36. The United Nations Mine Action Service continued to support the efforts of MONUSCO to protect civilians, destroying 75 explosive remnants of war, 214 weapons, 1,537 munitions and 170,233 small arms ammunition items for FARDC. An adequate explosive hazard management capacity will remain important.

D. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration/disarmament, demobilization repatriation, resettlement and reintegration

37. Further progress was made in the implementation of Phase III of the Programme national de désarmement, démobilisation et réintegration (PNDDR), even though the Government had not disbursed additional funding for the programme since November 2015. The Unité d'exécution du PNDDR demobilized 575 combatants during the period under review, bringing the total number of former combatants demobilized since the inception of the programme in May 2015 to 5,330. On 22 January 2016, MONUSCO resumed the provision of food and non-food items to Phase II of PNDDR, which it had suspended since 20 September 2015.

38. Clashes erupted on 24 February 2016 between FDLR ex-combatants and FARDC in the Government-run Kitona camp over allegations of the killing of an ex-combatant. The incident reportedly resulted in the killing of at least seven people. The MONUSCO-funded re-insertion centre also suffered considerable damage.

39. Construction continued on two re-insertion preparation centres in Kamina and Kitona, funded by MONUSCO, with construction completed on 29 January 2016 in Kitona. Some 2,660 former combatants in Kamina and 1,546 in Kitona are taking vocational training courses, which are expected to end on 31 March. The World Bank trust fund to support the reintegration phase became operational, and contributions have reached $26 million. At the same time, there were reports that FARDC had recruited 301 former combatants from the Kitona camp and another 280 from Kamina camp into its ranks.

40. MONUSCO continued to provide food, medicine and fuel to support 1,348 former FDLR combatants and their dependants in transit camps at Kanyabayonga (North Kivu) and Walungu (South Kivu), as well as in the Government-run camp at Kisangani (Tshopo).

E. Consolidation of State authority and stabilization

41. The Government through its Stabilization and Reconstruction Plan for Areas Emerging from Armed Conflict (STAREC) programme, with support from MONUSCO, began to prepare new stabilization initiatives to be funded in 2016 from the newly established Stabilization Coherence Trust Fund, which was set up through funding commitments of the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund, the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. These initiatives aim to implement provincial stabilization strategies and plans, with a focus on enhancing community dialogue with State representatives, strengthening security and State authority, providing economic recovery activities for vulnerable populations and addressing other conflict-related grievances.

F. Human rights situation

42. The human rights situation continued to be a source of serious concern during the reporting period. MONUSCO identified a trend towards increasingly restricted political space with increasing violations of the right to freedom of opinion, expression and peaceful assembly. The Mission continued to document violations,

including arbitrary arrests and harassment of civil society activists, media professionals and leading members of opposition parties, as well as the disruption of some opposition meetings and demonstrations or the refusal by Government officials to permit such activities. Most of those violations were committed without investigation or other corrective measures being taken by the national authorities. The national police and the Agence nationale de renseignements were allegedly responsible for perpetrating the majority of the reported violations. Since my last report, at least seven demonstrations planned or organized by opposition parties and/or civil society organizations have been violently repressed, dispersed by security forces or banned by local authorities. At least nine demonstrations, five of which were organized by the presidential majority, took place during the same period without interference by the authorities.

43. Armed groups, including ADF, FDLR, FRPI, LRA and Mayi-Mayi, continued to commit serious human rights abuses in North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri provinces. During the reporting period ADF combatants were responsible for at least 29 serious human rights violations. FRPI combatants were allegedly responsible for 52 serious human rights violations, FDLR for 25 violations and Nduma défense du Congo (NDC) and Mayi-Mayi Nyatura for 11 and 10 violations, respectively. From 5 to 13 January 2016, MONUSCO deployed a joint verification team to the Kayna, Kirumba, Luofu and Miriki areas in North Kivu to investigate allegations of serious crimes perpetrated by some of those groups. The team interviewed over 120 sources and confirmed a total of 162 human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law committed by some of those armed groups between 1 November 2015 and 7 January 2016. The abuses were reportedly committed in the context of ethnically targeted attacks launched in order to gain control over territory.

44. MONUSCO, through its prosecution support cells, continued to provide technical support to military justice authorities undertaking investigations and convening mobile courts in a number of locations in Ituri, North Kivu, South Kivu and Tanganyika provinces, for a range of crimes including murder, rape and the recruitment of child soldiers. The Mission also provided support to the civilian justice authorities in investigating and prosecuting grave crimes perpetrated in the eastern provinces. Through the Serious Crime Support Unit of the United Nations Police Division, MONUSCO reinforced the capacity of the national police to investigate the financing of armed groups and their involvement in the trafficking of natural resources. MONUSCO also trained Congolese civilian, police and military staff in prisons in Bunia (Ituri) and Uvira (South Kivu) on prison security and incident management.

45. On 2 January 2016, President Kabila promulgated a law implementing the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Sexual violence

46. Sixty persons were reported to be victims of conflict-related sexual violence, including eight girls and one boy. Armed groups were responsible for 83.3 per cent of those abuses and State actors for 16.6 per cent. MONUSCO continued to investigate allegations of the rape of at least 20 women in Walikale territory between 5 and 12 January 2016. In areas of risk in North Kivu, MONUSCO conducted market patrols with a view to enhancing the protection of women. The

United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict and MONUSCO continued to support the Government in developing a draft law on the protection of victims and witnesses.

Child protection

47. MONUSCO documented 242 cases of grave violation of children's rights, which represented a significant increase compared with the last reporting period, when 199 such cases were documented. A total of 174 children (156 boys and 18 girls) were separated or escaped from armed groups during the period under review, which indicated an increase in the release of children by armed groups in comparison with the previous reporting period. The main armed groups recruiting children were FDLR (49), FRPI (29), Mayi-Mayi Nyatura (29), Mayi-Mayi Rayia Mutomboki (17) and NDC Cheka (13). Fifteen boys formerly associated with armed groups were detained by FARDC (13) and the national police (2) in Ituri and North Kivu, five of whom remain in detention.

48. With the support of MONUSCO and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, the Commandement général des écoles militaires (CGEM) screened new FARDC recruits and found 84 children among them. The children were subsequently separated from FARDC. In January, CGEM requested the FARDC Joint Chiefs of Staff to apply sanctions against members of the recruitment team.

G. Humanitarian situation

49. As I witnessed during my visit to the eastern part of the country on 23 February 2016, the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains a source of serious concern, the result of the activities of armed groups, intercommunal violence, continued displacement and an influx of refugees. Military operations against armed groups also led to population displacement in some areas.

50. Humanitarian access continues to be hampered by insecurity. An increasing number of humanitarian actors were forced to suspend programmes owing to security threats in Irumu territory (Ituri), Beni and Lubero territories (North Kivu) and Shabunda territory (South Kivu), affecting thousands of people in need.

51. During the reporting period, there were 1.5 million internally displaced persons and some 169,000 refugees in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Among the refugees, over 100,000 are from the Central African Republic, some 30,000 from Rwanda and approximately 23,000 from Burundi. The dismantling of sites for internally displaced persons in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo by the Government, without sufficient consultation of the humanitarian community, contributed to the further displacement of some of the most vulnerable populations, especially women and children. On 12 January 2016, the closure by the Government of the camp at Mukoto, in Masisi territory in North Kivu, resulted in 4,250 persons being displaced once again. The humanitarian community encouraged the Government to respect its international obligations, including those related to the closure of sites for internally displaced persons.

52. The Humanitarian Response Plan for 2016 has a budget of $690 million and addresses the needs of 6 million people in need of assistance, which represents an increase of 800,000 people as compared with 2015.

H. Economic situation

53. Despite continued macroeconomic stability with an annual inflation rate of around 0.8 per cent, an estimated budget deficit of $1.3 billion for 2016 was announced during a meeting of the Council of Ministers on 22 January 2016. Some reports attributed the announced deficit to the continued fall in the prices of primary export commodities. In an effort to stabilize and stimulate the economy, the Council of Ministers adopted a set of measures on 26 January with a view to promoting greater transparency in extractive industries, streamlining the management of State-owned companies, attracting foreign investments by promoting a better business climate and, encouraging public private partnerships.

I. Regional developments

54. Little progress was made towards the implementation of the Nairobi Declarations of 12 December 2013, including with respect to the repatriation of ex-Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) elements, despite the initiatives of the task force established in December 2015 by the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region on the repatriation of ex-M23 elements.

55. On 14 January 2016, members of the Technical Support Committee of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework met in Nairobi to review developments in the region and progress in the implementation of the Framework. On 28 January, in Addis Ababa, in the margins of the African Union Summit, the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Framework held a meeting at the ministerial level. I have provided detailed information on the objectives and outcomes of those meetings in my report of 9 March 2016 on the implementation of the Framework (S/2016/232).

56. On 11 February 2016, the Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the United Nations, Ignace Gata Mavita wa Lufuta, wrote to the Security Council expressing concerns about the infiltration of recruited, trained and armed refugees from Rwanda into Burundi through South Kivu and called for respect for the commitments made under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework (S/2016/140). Senior officials of the Government of Rwanda have denied on several occasions any involvement by Rwanda in such activities.

57. On 24 February 2016, I attended the Great Lakes Private Sector Investment Conference hosted by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in Kinshasa, to promote investment in the Great Lakes Region as a means of ensuring durable peace and security.

III. Deployment of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and implementation of its mandate

58. In resolution 2211 (2015), the Security Council endorsed my earlier proposal for a reduction of the authorized strength of MONUSCO by 2,000 troops, which has been completed.

59. As indicated in my report on the future of United Nations peace operations (A/70/357-S/2015/682), I have instructed all missions to communicate to Headquarters any instances of refusal to follow orders given by the Force Commander or the Police Commissioner, whether on grounds of new national caveats or others. The Secretariat will immediately inform the Member State concerned and the Security Council on a regular basis. Where no remedial action is forthcoming, the unit concerned will be repatriated.

Force transformation

60. The effective transformation of the MONUSCO force remains an important objective. This will proceed in parallel with efforts to enhance interoperability between the Framework and force intervention brigades, while continuing efforts to ensure good performance.

61. Capability development will provide the MONUSCO force with the right equipment, training and resources to operate optimally. In that context, the deployment of the first rapidly deployable battalions is under way, and the first deployment of a company took place from 22 to 24 February 2016. Progress was also made towards the implementation and redeployment of the force, which will put troops and assets in the right places in a timely manner to meet current and future threats, as well as minimize inefficiencies. Three bases were closed in North Kivu and Ituri and one opened in another location in North Kivu during that period for an optimal concentration of the Mission's forces against prevailing threats posed by armed groups. Another area of the strategy involves reinforcing the capabilities of FARDC in terms of command and control, planning, logistics and the conduct of operations, with integration of more complex enabling functions such as intelligence and aviation, with a view to supporting FARDC in gradually taking over additional security responsibilities as the MONUSCO force withdraws. That support would be based on a formal request from the Government tailored to each operation.

Multi-phase review

62. A comprehensive and collaborative multi-phase review of MONUSCO commenced in February 2016 with the aim of achieving greater consistency and efficiency in mandate delivery and the use of resources. A team comprising representatives of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support visited MONUSCO from 3 to 9 February to discuss strategic priorities and the overall approach to mandate implementation to be reflected in the revised mission concept, which would be finalized following the adoption of the mandate in March and would inform component-level planning and a Mission structure and staffing review. Further to those consultations, it was agreed that priority would be placed on the political role of MONUSCO to facilitate dialogue among national stakeholders within the framework of the Congolese Constitution

and to support the creation of an environment conducive to the holding of peaceful and credible elections taking into account that sustainable solutions to most of the challenges in the Democratic Republic of the Congo would require addressing the political dimensions of conflict and finding a negotiated political settlement. Discussions with MONUSCO on the protection of civilians and the neutralization of armed groups underscored the need to approach those matters as a mission-wide priority, with an added focus on non-military initiatives, including strong political advocacy, enhanced reporting and effective liaison with communities. MONUSCO has begun developing tailored strategies, including military and non-military initiatives, to address the threat posed by armed groups.

Preparations for elections

63. Preparations by MONUSCO for the electoral process advanced, with the development of a joint mission plan for election security that is based on likely scenarios. That plan includes 18 area-specific security plans and enhanced early warning mechanisms and capacity, with a view to covering situational awareness in the western and central parts of the country, with a focus on preventive action, given the limited deployment of MONUSCO in those areas. That would entail enhanced deterrence and advocacy efforts, human rights monitoring and reporting, and training of the national police to mitigate possible election-related violence. The Mission will continue to keep the plan under review as the electoral process unfolds. MONUSCO is also increasing its internal crisis management capacity in Kinshasa. In addition, the deployment of an additional formed police unit to the capital will be completed by the end of March, while plans to enhance mobility and responsiveness are under development with the redeployment of aviation and armed personnel carriers. The focus of the MONUSCO force will remain on operations in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, although contingency plans envisage a rapid-response capacity. The review by MONUSCO of its configuration, in particular with regard to the police component, in view of increasing law and order challenges in the coming months, concluded that its current police strength was adequate, taking into account the possibility of intermission cooperation arrangements, in particular formed police units, in the event of large-scale violence in areas where MONUSCO is not deployed.

IV. Safety and Security of United Nations personnel

64. MONUSCO determined that its support to FARDC-led operations against armed groups, including FARDC-led operations against ADF in the Grand Nord area of North Kivu, had not led to any discernible increase in threats to United Nations personnel and installations. During the reporting period, there were 60 incidents reported involving United Nations personnel in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Thirty of those incidents were security-related, twenty-eight were accident-related safety incidents and two were related to the detention of national staff. The 30 security incidents included 12 burglaries, 8 thefts, 5 robberies, 3 non-violent public protests, 1 premises intrusion and 1 case of potential hostile surveillance. Seventy-five per cent of the safety incidents were road traffic accidents, while the remaining safety incidents comprised four fires and one flood.

V. Serious misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse

65. MONUSCO continued its efforts to eliminate sexual exploitation and abuse through a robust prevention campaign and more coordinated assistance to victims. My Special Representative promoted awareness of the United Nations standard of conduct and discipline during his visits to MONUSCO offices throughout the country, instructing all personnel on their obligations and calling on managers and commanders to lead by example in enforcing my zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse.

VI. Financial aspects

66. My proposed budget for the maintenance of MONUSCO for the period from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017 in the amount of $1,275,288,800 has been submitted to the General Assembly for its consideration and approval during the second part of its resumed seventieth session. Should the Security Council decide to extend the mandate of MONUSCO beyond 31 March 2016, the cost of maintaining MONUSCO would be limited to the amounts approved by the General Assembly for the 2016-2017 financial period.

VII. Observations

67. I would like to thank the Congolese authorities and people for their warm hospitality during my recent visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I was pleased to see for myself how much progress had been achieved since my first visit to the country over nine years ago. I was also encouraged by the tangible progress made towards strengthening the capacities of FARDC, in particular the commitment of the Government to address the issue of child recruitment, while progressing in the implementation of the FARDC sexual violence action plan, preparing for the re-insertion of thousands of demobilized ex-combatants and advancing police reforms. Those efforts are to be commended.

68. That progress notwithstanding, I am concerned about continuing political tensions and the impasse in the electoral process. I encourage all political actors to work together for a credible and inclusive process, in accordance with the Constitution. The holding of credible elections within the framework of the Constitution is crucially important to consolidate the progress made in the Democratic Republic of the Congo over the past decade. I urge Congolese political actors to spare no effort to ensure the holding of credible and timely elections and to preserve peace. Differences must be addressed through peaceful means. To that end, I encourage all Congolese political stakeholders to engage constructively in a meaningful political dialogue that places the national interest at the centre and urge them to extend their full cooperation to the Special Envoy of the African Union, Edem Kodjo. A constitutional crisis would undermine the significant political and economic gains achieved thus far, creating a serious risk of a slide back into conflict. I encourage regional and international partners to impress upon the Congolese stakeholders the need to preserve the collective efforts and investments made over the past years.

69. I am deeply concerned about the growing restrictions placed by the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on democratic space, particularly the targeting of members of the opposition, media and civil society. I call upon them to respect and protect the right to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, as provided for in the country's Constitution. I urge all leaders to refrain from inflammatory rhetoric that incites violence.

70. An up-to-date and credible voters' registry is a political imperative and the foundation of a credible electoral process. All efforts must be made to ensure that electoral preparations proceed at an accelerated pace. Some, but not all, of the conditions necessary for the National Independent Electoral Commission to conduct a credible revision of the voters' registry exist. In that context the Commission has requested support from MONUSCO for the updating of the voters' registry. Such assistance could help the Commission to assume its primary role in the organization of the elections, enhance the credibility of the revision of the voters' registry, in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 20 of resolution 2211 (2015), and remove that obstacle to timely elections. I therefore recommend that the Security Council authorize the Mission to begin providing technical and logistical support to the Commission for the revision of the voters' registry. A number of risks must be managed in providing such assistance. A complete revision of the electoral registry may lead to a technical delay in the holding of elections beyond the constitutionally mandated timeframe. The revision process will need to be continuously assessed in order to minimize that risk. The Commission has agreed, in principle, to joint monitoring of the process with MONUSCO, UNDP and other key partners to ensure it is carried out as quickly as possible and in a credible manner. It will be important for key political actors to agree on the time frame for and extent of the revision of the voters' registry. I therefore call upon all stakeholders to redouble their efforts to reach a consensus on those questions as quickly as possible.

71. The situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo is deeply concerning. I am appalled by the continued attacks on defenceless civilians in Beni, Lubero and Walikale territories in North Kivu and in Ituri. Armed groups continue to commit serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law and have created extremely precarious conditions for displaced persons and local communities. The increasing fragmentation of armed groups not only poses a threat to civilians, but is also an obstacle to the neutralization of those groups. We must do more to protect civilians from the scourge of those armed groups.

72. There is no purely military solution to the problem of armed groups. Addressing the problem posed by those groups more effectively requires tailored approaches and a balanced combination of military and non-military actions. MONUSCO troops must be ready and willing to use force against those who pose a threat to the civilian population, and do so pre-emptively. Addressing the threat posed by those armed groups also requires MONUSCO to exercise its responsibilities effectively through improved performance of its military and police components. The conduct of targeted offensive operations to neutralize armed groups should remain the priority task of the force intervention brigade. However, urgent measures are required to ensure a more active contribution by the Framework brigades to the neutralization of armed groups and the protection of civilians. To achieve sustainable outcomes, the protection of civilians and the neutralization of armed groups should be approached as a Mission-wide responsibility, using military and non-military means, with the coordinated and active contribution of all elements

of the force, the police and the Mission's civilian components. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, the extension of State authority and efforts to disrupt the support base, networks and financing of armed groups, some of which are criminal in nature, are critical to the neutralization of armed groups and require additional focus.

73. The commitments made under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework remain relevant and their implementation is critical for sustainable peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region. The implementation of the Nairobi Declarations and the Framework is still fraught with challenges. I call upon all signatories to the Framework to honour their commitments under the Framework and to work together to ensure that the gains achieved thus far are sustained.

74. I welcome the positive momentum generated thus far in deepening the partnership between MONUSCO and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including the signing of the technical arrangement on 28 January to resume military cooperation against priority armed groups. Close cooperation between the Government and MONUSCO, combining military and non-military efforts, will render efforts to neutralize armed groups and protect civilians more effective. The strategic dialogue between MONUSCO and the Government remains an important forum for addressing issues of concern. I welcome the steps taken by the Government and the Mission towards the development of an exit strategy for MONUSCO and look forward to the swift completion of that process.

75. In my letter dated 16 December 2015 (S/2015/983), I proposed a further reduction of the MONUSCO force by 1,700 troops, while taking into account the increasingly complex situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the need for more effective mandate implementation in the coming months. That should be viewed as a concrete step towards facilitating the resumption of the strategic dialogue between the United Nations and the Government, with a view to achieving a common goal: the gradual and progressive exit of MONUSCO that preserves the gains and investment made thus far and averts a return to instability or conflict. The transformation of the force, if implemented fully and with the necessary resources, would ensure that the Mission continues to deliver effectively on its neutralization and protection mandates, responds quickly and robustly to threats throughout the eastern part of the country and covers conflict-affected areas, even as its static footprint is gradually reduced.

76. The presence of MONUSCO in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains essential, particularly with regard to its political role and other core functions. I therefore recommend that the Security Council extend the mandate of MONUSCO, as established in resolution 2211 (2015), for a period of one year, until 31 March 2017.

77. In conclusion, I wish to extend my gratitude to my Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Maman Sidikou, and to all staff members of MONUSCO and the specialized agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system for their continued hard work to restore lasting peace and stability in the country. I also wish to thank all troop- and police-contributing countries, the African Union, the European Union, bilateral partners and other international and regional stakeholders for their active engagement in support of peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Map No. 4412 Rev. 18 UNITED NATIONS
January 2016 (Colour)

Department of Field Support
Geospatial Information Section (formerly Cartographic Section)